




Speech By
Hon. Anastacia Palaszczuk

MEMBER FOR INALA

Record of Proceedings, 22 February 2022

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Coronavirus, Update; Coronavirus, Restrictions

 **Hon. A PALASZCZUK** (Inala—ALP) (Premier and Minister for the Olympics) (9.40 am): I advise that we have 5,583 new cases of COVID-19 and 4,039 positive RAT results. Tragically there have been five deaths, one in aged care, and I know that all members of this House pass on our condolences to the families of the deceased. We have 380 people in hospital and 30 in ICU. Eleven are currently ventilated. As we know, these numbers are coming down as we come off the wave.

In relation to our vaccine coverage, 92.54 per cent of Queenslanders have had their first dose and 90.61 per cent have had their second dose, which is great news. In terms of boosters, 63.11 per cent of the eligible population have received their boosters. In relation to our five- to 11-year-olds, 42.11 per cent have had their first dose.

When the story of this pandemic is written it will show that no-one completely escaped the impacts of COVID, but it will also show some places fared better than most and one of these places is right here in Queensland. The reason is clear: the vast majority of our state was vaccinated before COVID arrived. The credit for this belongs to every single Queenslanders, but I am proud that our government did everything possible to ensure our people were protected. We travelled the length and breadth of this state. We put vaccine hubs in schools, Bunnings and caravan shows. Our health workers went door-to-door in places where vaccine numbers were too low.

When New South Wales confronted its outbreak, only four per cent of its population was vaccinated. That ended in months of lockdowns and billions of dollars worth of lost business. When COVID came to Queensland, 80 per cent of Queenslanders were fully vaccinated. The data shows our decision to delay the start of school was absolutely the right one. The number of children infected is currently lower than the peak in mid-January. The number of teaching, health and emergency services staff infected is falling too.

We are cautiously optimistic that the number of hospitalisations and infections has peaked, which is why today I can make this announcement: from 6 pm on Friday, 4 March masks will no longer be required in most settings. You will not need them at work or in school or at the shops. Staff and patrons will not be required to wear them at cafes, pubs or restaurants. Smiles are back! We can put our masks away. They will still be needed on public transport, at airports, in hospitals, disability care, prisons and aged-care facilities. If you feel vulnerable you should wear one. If you want to wear one you can.

We are scrapping density limits that apply to weddings and funerals and the number of people you can have in your own home. There will be no density limits in food courts, hairdressers, gyms, private venue hire spaces and universities. In addition, bans on excursions, assemblies and visitors to schools will go as of 4 March. As these restrictions ease, parents who are yet to have their children vaccinated might want to consider bringing those vaccinations forward.

This is all about getting our lives back to a new normal. Normal does not include a televised daily COVID update. We will still publish COVID numbers every day, but from the first week of March we will see our Chief Health Officer only if needed. The story of this pandemic is not yet over, but we hope a brighter chapter awaits. Thank you, Queensland.